

Dear Colleagues,

It has been a very busy year. I am pleased to report on a number of initiatives and undertakings of VIUFA in this time, and some ideas for the future of our union.

1. Bargaining

With the leadership of Jane Wodlinger, Bargainer, VIUFA has embarked on bargaining a new collective agreement. There are challenges in this round, as in any, but we have welcomed the opportunity to know more about your priorities as individuals, to help the bargaining team understand and articulate our collective priorities for this round.

2. Workload review (union work)

The union – any union – serves its members in a number of ways. The union exists to negotiate the collective agreement that governs your working conditions; to defend your rights as negotiated, and as given to every worker under Employment legislation; and to assist you in exercising your rights as employees under the Collective Agreement. Serving members in this way is good work: it is fulfilling, rewarding, interesting work, and it *is* work – it takes time and skill. I am so grateful for the members who step up for this work; it is a real privilege to work with such a professional team. It is necessary to occasionally examine whether the amount of work aligns with the release that is given to do it. We have undertaken a review of the workload for various roles and the release given at our sibling unions in FPSE, and have found ourselves to be outliers in some regards. We have among the lowest dues-rate in FPSE, at 1.89%, and we also have among the lowest usage of FPSE legal and staff resources, and among the lowest release levels for core union roles; this speaks to the heavy lifting that VIUFA service roles play compared to our colleagues at other institutions. Some adjustments in VIUFA's release structure are critical to maintaining a union that works effectively in your interests. The VIUFA Executive is making recommendations to increase the releases for the Chief Steward and the Bargainer positions by one section each year. After such an increase, VIUFA will still be at the lower end of the release spectrum for the core positions, within the medium-to-large FPSE unions (we are the third largest union among 18 unions).

3. Our CUPE employees

VIUFA is also an employer (two employees), and it is our responsibility to negotiate the collective agreement with their union. Their agreement expired in March of this year.

Service:

Presidents' Council, FPSE. Seven meetings, 1.5 days each, variously on zoom or in person.

Chair, VIUFA Executive meetings, every two weeks

VIUFA Table Officers meetings, every two weeks

Alternating Chair: Meetings with Employer: Joint Labour/Management Committee, once a month (when not bargaining)

VIUFA representation at meetings for Whistleblower policy development.

Member representation, as needed.

Chair, three General Membership Meetings.

Spokesperson, VIUFA Contract Negotiations, 29 half-days at the table.

Replacement Disability Management and Rehabilitation Representative

I want to thank the membership for their support in my first year as president. My deep thanks go to a wonderful Executive and a truly excellent Bargaining Team. I am grateful to Laura Buechler (who is our rock) and Neil McLeod (who rocks); their excellence and professionalism make it better!

Respectfully submitted,

Gara Pruesse
President, VIUFA